

West

Sierra Leone

THE STORY OF MOYAMBA HOME

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UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST,
406-408 Otterbein Press Bldg.,
Dayton, Ohio.

Price 2 Cents

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In 1900, after Moyamba had been made the Government headquarters for the Ronietta District of Sierra Leone a deed was secured by the United Brethren Mission for eight acres of land near the town. Temporary buildings served for both missionaries and pupils for a number of years. In 1902, a substantial stone church was dedicated, followed by the building of a mud schoolhouse with a galvanized iron roof in 1905. This has since been enlarged (in 1915) by the addition of a substantial cement barrie. In 1907, the present mission house was built. It is a cement block, two story house containing eight rooms, and, under the same roof extended as an L at the back, a girl's house of six rooms. In addition to these buildings the grounds contain a parsonage and laborers' house.

The girls' house is far too small since the school has enlarged so greatly, so in 1918, a large barrie had to be built for a dining room and play room and the downstairs rooms of the girls' house used as bed rooms. But even this did not suffice and in 1918-19 we had to build a native mud house for the little girls. Two rooms of the mission house are now being used for industrial work and reading rooms. Everything is much overcrowded and a new building is greatly needed.

The school began with only a few girls gathered from the Rotifunk and Shenge schools. It grew slowly for a number of years as the people had to be brought to believe in education for girls. In 1918 the enrollment was fifty-eight.

The following missionaries have each contributed to the advancement of the school: Rev. and Mrs. E. A. King, Miss Minnie Eaton, Mr. and Mrs. Todd, Miss Mary Murrel, Rev. and Mrs. C. W. Snyder, Mr. and Mrs. Southard, Miss Ella Shanklin, Miss Etta Odle, Miss Lula Clippinger, Misses Jessie and May Hoerner and Miss Naomi Wilson.

The aim of the school has always been to train the African girl for home-making. The girls pay, in part, for their schooling and their parents are valuing the school higher and higher, so that more and more money is coming in each year.

The girls attend school five hours a day, getting, as they say, book knowledge. The remainder of the time is devoted to regular housework and industrial phases. The older girls are now taking definite work in home-making subjects and attend the day school only two hours a day. These same girls are getting practical work in running a home by being organized to help run the boarding school. Before a girl leaves the school, if she stays long enough to complete the course, she has not only completed her studies through eight grades and taken the examinations for the Secondary Schools, but she has also learned how to do good

laundering, cook her own foods well and use some foreign foodstuffs in combination with her own; to make her own clothes and those of her children; to keep accounts and appreciate the value of money, and how it can be used to best advantage; she understands hygiene and sanitation as applied to her family, house and town; she learns to teach others, appreciate beauty in nature, dress and music and also learns the value of making use of leisure hours. Most of the girls as they become old enough become communicant members of the church. All are seeker members.

The girls come from many parts of Sierra Leone. They represent at present four different tribes and for that reason, largely, you would find you could talk to any of them for they all speak English, that being the language they study in the schools and the only language they all understand.

Eighteen years is not a very long time to observe the life of one individual, especially if you begin when the child is small, so we cannot go very far back into what the school has done for the girls. But we do have some shining examples of the influence of Christian education in the lives of the girls. Some shine out more than others, because their lives have been lived more in the foreground of mission life but we feel sure that every girl who has come into the school has been better for having been there.

One example of what a girl can make out of her home may be found in Mrs. Alfred Smart. Her father

is a native chief ; her mother does not even understand the broken English of the country and is purely native in customs and belief. Mrs. Smart now has a family of four children, all living ; is a real help to her husband in his pastoral work ; has a cosy, comfortable home ; is teachable and sensible in regard to customs, fads and fancies, which, in a country that is just opening like this one, are sometimes bewilderingly numerous. And Mrs. Smart not only in her own life shows what the school has done for her, she also shows her appreciation by placing her own daughter in the school at the highest rates we have. And does Alice show what her parents are ? To those of us who believe in heredity and the effect of environment in the life of the child, we would say Yes. Alice had by ten per cent. a general average higher than any other girl in the school last year.

Some one says, "Yes, that is fine, but you have chosen the best as an example of what you are doing. How about the others ?" I have chosen this example because she is the only one we have of a tiny child (taken into the Rotifunk Mission) who was trained to womanhood at Moyamba and now has a family of her own. The others who have families were in the school only a very few years. But the lives of one hundred and forty-nine girls have been touched by being in the school. We have at least forty in the school now who are still quite small or have been with us since they were seven or eight years old. What

their lives will show twenty years from now can only be imagined, but those of us who have worked with the girls, most confidently believe they will rival Mrs. Stuart as homemakers and we hope even outshine her because their opportunities have been greater. Moyamba is the *only* big opportunity within the reach of thousands of girls. Can it touch them as it should?

